DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 222 268 PS 013 125

TITLE	Involving Parents and Volunteers in Military Child Care Centers.
INSTITUTION	Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (DOD), Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY	Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C.
REPORT NO	DoD-6060.1-M-16
PUB DATE	Apr 82
NOTE	74p.; For related documents, see PS 013 111-124 and PS 013 155-157.
AVAILABLE FROM	Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402 (Stock No. 008-000-00380-7, $4.50).
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Class Activities; *Day Care Centers; Early Childhood Education; Guidelines; *Parent Participation; Parent School Relationship; *Staff Development; *Teaching Methods; *Volunteer Training
IDENTIFIERS	*Military Day Care

ABSTRACT

Parents can play a variety of roles in the life of a child care center. These roles are limited only by the time and interests of parents and the openness and creativity of the center staff. This guidebook, one of a series on the subject of military child care centers, discusses ways to effectively involve parents and other volunteers in the child care program. It specifically discusses ways for strengthening the center/home link, considering different kinds of involvement, encouraging parent/staff communication, making the center a family resource, and developing an effective volunteer program. (MP)

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Involving Parents And Volunteers in Military Child Care Centers

PS013125

April 1982

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
MANPOWER, RESERVE AFFAIRS, AND LOGISTICS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

MANPOWER,
RESERVE AFFAIRS
AND LOGISTICS
(Military Personnel and Force Management)

01 APR 1982

FOREWORD

This series of manuals for Child Care Givers on DoD Installations is issued under the authority of DoD Instruction 6060.1, "Training Manuals for Child Care Givers on DoD Installations," January 19, 1981. Its purpose is to provide child care givers with training materials that include the latest techniques and procedures for the safe care and guiding development of children entrusted to their care.

This series of manuals, DoD 6060.1-M-1 through DoD 6060.1-M-17, was developed under the auspices of the Department of Health and Human Services by the Department of Army, in cooperation with the Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps.

The provisions of this series of manuals apply to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments, and the Defense Agencies (hereafter referred to as DoD Components) whose heads shall ensure that the manuals are distributed or otherwise made available to all child care givers on DoD installations and that these materials are used in regional and inter-Service workshops, seminars, and training sessions.

This series of manuals is effective immediately.

Send recommended changes to the manuals through channels to:

Director, Personnel Administration and Services
Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
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R. Dean Tice
Lieutenant General, USA
Deputy Assistant Secretary

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FORMING A PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN

It probably is not a coincidence that most child care programs which are considered first rate are noted for the active and diverse roles that parents or other family members play in them. Many families now are in the difficult position of having to share the responsibility for the care of their children with adults who are not part of their own family. Parents rarely want to give up this responsibility for raising their children. As a result, good child care programs build on the fact that parents want to be involved with their children and they find ways to strengthen and promote family relationships.

There are a variety of roles that parents can play in the life of a child care center. The roles are limited only by the time and interests of parents and the openness and creativity of the center staff. Whatever roles parents play in the center, they are potentially important ones for their children. Small children should feel that their family is familiar with the other people in their world and that they approve of these people. Children also should feel that center staff members are familiar with and respect their families. Parent involvement in the life of the center is the key to this partnership.

From the moment of birth and, perhaps, from the moment of conception, a child is learning what he needs to know to be a human being who must live in a particular society with particular ways of looking at things. Family members are the first and very important teachers who help children develop these understandings. It is for this reason that the idea of very young children, from infancy through the preschool years, being cared for by someone other than family for most of their waking hours, should be looked at closely.

What values and priorities should a child care center emphasize? How can we be sure that what families are teaching at home is reflected in some meaningful way during the time that children are in a child care center? How can families influence and participate in child-rearing and have someone to share their thoughts with when their children spend considerable time in a child care center and they spend time at work? These important questions underlie the philosophy which has had growing support in this country since, in particular, the development of the Head Start program in the early 1960's: *Families and caregivers must work together to raise and educate children.* The necessity and benefits of such a partnership have been well-documented over the past 20 years.

In spite of general recognition that family involvement in child care programs for the very young is essential, the *majority* of child care programs show little or no such involvement. There is a widespread belief that such involvement is nearly impossible! Staff often claim that working parents don't have time to participate. In fact, research shows that working mothers participate *more* than non-working mothers when a role and a time period are available to them which they can meet. Besides, if a mother can't participate, often other family members can, but never are asked. The very people who could enrich the child care environment with their presence - fathers, older siblings, grandparents - rarely are thought of when involvement is considered. Experience has shown that if many different ways of participating are offered to families and the invitation is always open, sooner or later most parents will become involved.

This kind of involvement in the child care center need not be limited to parents, either. In any community there are all sorts of individuals and groups looking for meaningful things to do and constructive ways to share their talents and skills. The more such people are involved with a community's children, the stronger the community which results. Again, if many different and meaningful volunteer roles are made available, many people are likely to become involved over time.

Many of those who have participated in parent co-coperative preschools and in Head Start have found that involvement in these programs has unexpected benefits. The parents learn a lot about their own child and child development. They find comfort in knowing that other parents have the same concerns about child-rearing. They find that the preschool or child care center is a good spot to make friends and acquaintances who also have young children. Some parents who work in the preschool or center get basic training in this area and later choose to go ahead and develop a career in teaching or child care.

Is extensive involvement by parents really possible and workable? The Head Start preschool experience speaks for itself. By design the Head Start philosophy recommended that parents assist in planning the program, participate in parent education programs, participate in the children's classrooms, serve as a link between children, staff and neighborhood, and fill appropriate jobs within the program.[1] How has it really worked? Several recent national studies of Head Start programs revealed the following about parent participation in representative programs:[2]

89 percent of the members of policy-making committees/ councils were parents or former parents

parents' ideas and suggestions were reflected in the program plans of 87 percent of the programs

80 percent of the programs involved parents in the staff hiring process

in 88 percent of the programs parents selected sites for field trips and decided what volunteer activities should be in the program

92 percent of the Head Start teachers held scheduled conferences with parents about their children

32 percent of the staff were parents of children currently or formerly enrolled

80 percent of the programs used parents in planning and preparing meals

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[1] R. Cooke (Chairman), *Recommendations For A Head Start Program* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, February 19, 1965), p. 4.

[2] R. A. O'Keefe, "What Head Start Means To Families." In Lillian Katz (Ed.), *Current Topics In Early Childhood Education*, Vol. 2 (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Company, 1979).

49 percent of the parents said they help at least once a month with a program

in 71 percent of the programs parents were involved in developing lists of available community resources for families

Child care centers and programs which have involved families in creative ways have found many unexpected benefits, also. In addition to opening channels for communication between caregivers and parents and using parents' ideas and participation in setting policies and in the daily program schedule, here is a partial list of other important things that parents and volunteers have contributed to such programs:

repairing plumbing, electrical equipment and play equipment
designing and building equipment and toys
keeping books and paying bills
picking up and delivering supplies and equipment
preparing meals or snacks for the children
recruiting and managing a volunteer program for the center
recruiting consultants for use in the center program
caring for those few children who need care before the center opens or after it closes
researching and planning special programs or curriculum ideas
soliciting donations for the center
painting and refinishing toys and walls
typing and telephoning

CONSIDERING DIFFERENT KINDS OF INVOLVEMENT

Each child care center and community is different. If family involvement and volunteer programs are to be effective, they must be appropriate to the center and to the families involved. Factors to be considered when designing parent involvement include[3]

the number of working mothers

ethnic group values of families using the center

stability of the community

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[3]Phyllis Click, *Administration Of Schools For Young Children* (Albany, New York: Delmar Publishers, 1975), p. 102.

size of the community

physical setting of the child care center

Working parents

If there is a large number of working mothers who use a center offering full day care, few parents probably can be used as teacher aides. Even then, however, some parents might work part-time or have flexible schedules and be interested to participate in some way at the center. Some other ways that the working parent could be involved in the child's life at the center include participating in decision-making processes, doing work for the center at home or after work hours, being involved in training or parent education programs held in the evening or on weekends, receiving regular center newsletters and contributing to them. If the mother or father who works full time does not have enough energy left for formal involvement, this must also be respected.

Ethnic differences

Different ethnic groups have different values about who should make decisions concerning children and about the relationship of the home to the children's center or program. These value differences must be recognized and respected in designing parent involvement, as well. You should know the answers to questions such as those that follow, as you design a family involvement program in the multi-cultural military setting in particular:

Is it acceptable for only the mother to be involved in center activities and decisions or must the father be included?

Do families feel that the professionals in charge of the center have absolute responsibility for the children's program?

Do families see the home and children's program as completely separate and like it that way?

In addition to value differences, there are frequently language differences in a military setting:

Can the center assure hospitality and respect for a parent or volunteer who may not speak the language spoken by most in the center?

Can all parents read the parent handbooks and newsletters sent home by the center or should they be translated into one or more other languages?

Community stability

The mobility or stability of the population from which a center draws its families can affect the kinds of parent involvement best suited to your center. A center in a military community can expect a predictable amount of mobility and, therefore, may have more trouble finding parents with enough time to develop teaching and decision-making skills within the center program. Also, centers which have a large proportion of drop-in care may find more success with family involvement that extends to the broader parent community. For example, a regularly scheduled monthly parent and children's supper with a short educational program or a parent library and resource center open to any interested parents on the installation may appeal to those less involved on a regular basis with center care. On the other hand, less mobile families and regular center users can be involved with the life of the center over a longer period of time and become integral parts of the program.

Community size

The size of the community which the center serves also affects the kind of parent involvement. If children are bused to the center from distant areas or are brought with parents going to work from off-installation housing at some distance, it may be very difficult to arrange ways to involve parents. On the other hand, a center located near installation housing or at the hub of other community activities may become a center for many kinds of activities.

Physical setting of the center

If the center has the luxury of having a space where parents can meet on an informal and on a scheduled basis, involvement becomes a lot easier. Setting aside such a parent area which may include a library of parent resources including books, magazines, filmstrips and/or videotapes conveys the idea that the center is for the entire family, not just for the children.

In summary, the idea of family involvement in child care means several different things - family participation in the center, family involvement at home and family education. These major types of involvement all contribute to making the child's early experiences in the center more meaningful. There are many different strategies that centers have used in their efforts to assure that families and staff share understandings about the children in care. The checklist on the following page will give you a chance to look at some of the ways that families are and can be involved in center life.

LOOKING AT FAMILY INVOLVEMENT - A CHECKLIST

Look carefully at the following checklist of some ways that families can be involved with child care center programs. Check the ways that your center currently involves families on a regular basis. Now look at those which you haven't checked and consider the possibilities in your own center. Notice that the list moves from less family involvement to more actual participation and investment in the program.

Families are an AUDIENCE, receiving information about the purpose and conduct of the program. ____

- bulletin board is located in receiving area with menus, schedules, health tips. ____
- parent handbook is given to each parent which includes goals and description of program and expectations. ____
- notes and letters are sent home to inform parents about the child's day. ____
- regular news letter with information about ongoing activities is circulated. ____
- parent group meeting is periodically held to introduce staff, explain program. ____

Families are provided with EDUCATION AND SUPPORT for their own child rearing. ____

- informal conversations between parents and caregivers occur daily about their children. ____
- individual conferences are scheduled on a regular basis between caregivers and parents concerning the children. ____
- families are visited at home occasionally by center staff member in attempt to better understand child's home setting. ____
- parents are encouraged to work with their children at home and try center suggestions for projects, activities. ____
- families are involved in parent education workshops, lectures, group discussions on child development topics at the center. ____
- families are linked with other available community and health services through the center or by referral. ____

Family members are involved as VOLUNTEERS in the program. _____

- family members volunteer for roles in the children's program e.g. classroom aide, preparing special programs. _____

- family members volunteer as resource mobilizers, finding funding and support for the center from outside. _____

- family members volunteer for non-classroom roles in the center e.g. parent coordinator, toy and doll repair, clerical tasks. _____

Family members are involved as trained PAID STAFF WITHIN the program. _____

Family members are involved in planning, DECISION-MAKING and policy setting positions in the center. _____

- families are surveyed for their ideas and preferences on program content. _____

- families are involved in the staff selection decisions by sitting on interview panels. _____

- families are involved in setting center policy and in advisory capacity through participation on Center Advisory Committee. _____

ENCOURAGING PARENT-STAFF COMMUNICATION

Good communication among concerned adults helps children integrate their child care experiences with their home life. There needs to be some degree of understanding and agreement between parents and staff of a child care center about what they each want for the children. It is, therefore, important that parents have channels open to them to influence what goes on in a child care program. On the other hand, staff must have enough information about the children and their families so that they can understand and appreciate what they are experiencing at home. The most effective channels are the day-to-day relationships which develop between the parents and center staff.

In any quality child care center there is an emphasis on human relations and a variety of ways - both formal and informal - by which the center encourages parent-staff communications and mutual respect.

KEEPING FAMILIES IN TOUCH AND INFORMED

As the checklist on family involvement in the preceding section suggests, there are a variety of ways that family members can be involved in a child care center.

> Families can be an AUDIENCE receiving information about the program.
>
> Families can be provided with EDUCATION AND SUPPORT for their own child rearing through education programs, workshops and other resources.
>
> Family members can be involved as VOLUNTEERS in the program.
>
> Family members can be PAID STAFF in the center.
>
> Family members can be involved in PLANNING, DECISION-MAKING AND POLICY SETTING in the center, e.g., as a member of a center advisory body.

In order to assure the maximum link between families and the center, center users should have an opportunity to be involved in all of the ways described above.

Looking at the first role above - the family as an AUDIENCE - there are a variety of ways to share information with parents about the center's purpose, on-going activities and their children's adjustment to center life. This information sharing role is mutual. Parents also must have some ways to let caregivers know about their preferences, concerns and goals for their own children. Communication is a two-way street. Sharing information about children is an important way to strengthen the center-home link.

Parents' first visit

The first time that a parent comes to the child care center to register a child or to inquire about services is an important time for forming opinions by both the parent and the staff. This visit should involve more than simply providing the parent with written information. In some cases, this first visit is the longest visit that the parent will make to the center. If possible, the center director or a staff member should sit and talk with the parent. If the child is with the parent, this also provides the staff member a chance to observe parent/child interactions informally. This important first meeting can give both the staff member and the parent a chance to form an impression of each other's expectations for young children; some sense of how the new child might fit into the center program; and a feeling of personal contact between the child's family and the staff who will care for the child.

Parent handbook

Perhaps the first piece of formal information which a parent will receive is an up-to-date Parent Handbook. This handbook should assist the parent in understanding the program and should serve as a reference during the child's enrollment. The minimum contents of such a handbook should be

> an introduction to the philosophy of your center's program which has been developed by your staff to reflect what actually goes on at the center
>
> information about the center's policies which directly affect parents, e.g. hours of operation, center advisory structure, prices, eligibility criteria, regulations concerning bringing sick children to the center, meals and snacks served by the center, staff/child ratios, disciplinary policies
>
> information on admissions requirements which must be met prior to the child's admission to the program, e.g. immunization record, completion of the emergency information form and of the information on health-history

Other information which your handbook might include, depending upon how frequently you plan to revise it, is information on things which can be expected to vary such as the names and room assignments of staff members, fees and the center's annual calendar. If the center does not plan to revise the Parent Handbook at least annually, as little as possible of this variable information should be included. This information should be given to parents along with the Handbook on separate sheets.

Every center user should have such a Handbook and should receive it at the time of the first visit to the center. Parents have a right to expect a thorough, clear explanation of the center's policies and procedures in writing. They also should have the opportunity to discuss these policies with staff if they so choose.

The pages which follow are taken from one military center's Parent Handbook. As you will notice, every policy which affects parents is explained in detail. This sample Handbook includes some "variable" or changing information since the center director revises it annually.

Dear Military Family,

Welcome to the Pacific Northwest and the Installation Child Care Center! Our aim is to provide a safe environment, enriching experiences and warm, loving care for your children during their stay with us. We would like to extend an open invitation to you to drop in often for informal visits. This will give us the opportunity to become acquainted with you and enable us to provide optimum learning experiences for your children.

The keynote of our center is informality. We value the freedom to be oneself - both for children and adults. In our center a relaxed and casual setting is offered which is geared to the needs and interests of the children and their families. Individual differences and special abilities, as well as family cultural patterns, are taken into consideration in our program.

Thank you for permitting us to join with you in providing for the care, loving and nurturing of your developing children. We look forward with eagerness to a mutually rewarding friendship.

Sincerely,

The Director and Staff

ELIGIBILITY

In order to attend the Installation Child Care Center, a child must be a dependent, or bona fide guest of active duty or retired military personnel, or the dependent of a civilian government employee employed on the installation.

The center accepts children aged 6 weeks to 12 years. Children with special needs or handicapping conditions will be admitted on an individual basis upon consultation with the director.

The child must be free from any contagious illness, healthy enough to participate in normal center routine, and all immunizations recommended by medical SOP's must be up-to-date. Please bring your child's shot record the first time at the center. If children have a rash or are taking medication, they will not be admitted without a physician's statement verifying that the rash or illness is not contagious. If children are too ill to attend public schools, thet are too ill to attend the child care center. Under no circumstances, will medication be administered by the center's staff.

CENTER HOURS

Monday-Thursday:	0615-2300
Friday:	0615-0100
Saturday:	0900-0100
Sunday:	0900-1200
Holidays:	Closed

(Open additional hours by arrangement - Contact the director).

CENTER RATES

Children Per Family	Hourly Rate	Weekly Cards
1	$0.75	$25.00
Ea. Add'l Child	$0.55	$20.00

Computing Charges: The minimum hourly rate will be charged for the first hour, or any fraction thereof. Following the first hour, charges are computed on a 15-minute basis.

Weekly Budget Cards: For your convenience and budget, a card system (price listed above) for prepaying weekly child care has been instituted at the center. Regarding the purchase and use of the card, the following policies have been established.

Customers may purchase the cards at the reception desk, and the cards will be presented (in lieu of cash) when picking up children. When you purchase a card it is your responsibility to safeguard it. We regret that no credit can be given for lost, stolen or misplaced cards. Safeguard your card as you would your money. There will be no refunds on any card, and all cards will have an expiration date (thus enabling us to offer the reduced rates and convenience). The card for the second child in the family is valid only in conjunction with the first child in the family. For accounting purposes, the center considers the first child in the family to be the child who remains in the center for the longest period of time.

Overtime Charges: $1.00 per family for the first 15 minutes (grace period); $1.00 per child per five minutes thereafter. These charges are preventive measures. In the event of a bona fide emergency, other arrangements can be made; but PLEASE CALL THE CENTER IMMEDIATELY if you are going to be unable to pick up your children by closing time.

ADMISSION PROCEDURES

a. All center users must fill out and present a completed Health and Information Card to the receptionist when a child is registered at the center.

HEALTH CARD EMERGENCY PERMISSION

Our Health and Information cards are the source of information regarding special allergies, health problems, emergency telephone numbers and names of responsible friends who will care for your child in the event of emergency when you cannot be reached. If this is your first visit to our center, you must complete the card before your child can be accepted. A second, wallet-sized card (Health, Information and Parent Permission) will also be completed. You, the parent(s) or guardian(s) will retain possession of this card, except when the child is in the center. When you bring your child to the center, this card will be presented

to the desk receptionist and filed until you return. When you pick your child up, the card will be returned to you for future use. It is recommended that both parents complete and retain one of these cards each. THIS INFORMATION IS FOR YOUR CHILD'S SAFETY!

When your address or phone number changes, please sure to update your card. This is the best means of protecting your child.

b. Children are signed in at the reception desk before entering their section. Please be prepared to spend a few moments assuring correct information and details pertaining to the care of your child. All children must be accompanied to the reception desk by a parent, or person authorized on the Health Card by the parent, for registration upon each occasion. Be prepared to show your ID card.

c. Make a name tag for the child - first and last name, please. Masking tape is supplied for this purpose. If your child is to have meals at the center, note this information on the name tag, also.

d. When your child has been registered at the reception desk, you are to escort him to his section. Please see that the staff member in charge of the section is aware of his arrival. Please know what your child has in his pockets. Small cars get lost, favorite marbles disappear, money may be swallowed and aspirin, vitamin pills and so forth simply don't belong in our center.

There is no hard and fast rule as to which section a child must enter. The child's maturation level is the determining factor. Parents who request that siblings stay together must consult the director. We do reserve the right to change a child from one area to another when we feel it is in the best interest of the child.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR CAREGIVERS

When you take your child to her section, you may want the caregivers there to have some additional information about your child.

How many diapers, bottles, etc. did you include? Will the child need a nap, reminders to go potty or does she use any special words for special needs? Are there other children in the center she knows or siblings who may be a comfort to her if she gets upset? Did you bring a change of clothes for "accidents?" (Our supply of emergency clothes is very limited and older children hate to be put in diapers, even if they are dry and their own clothes aren't!) If your child is in the process of being "potty trained," please bring waterproof panties for use in the center. Is there anything we should know that will help us make your child's stay pleasant? Is there any physical problem of which we should be aware (even though it is written on the Health Card)? Is your child to be fed?

SIGN-OUT PROCEDURES

The charges for child care are paid to the receptionist prior to getting your child in his section. (You may be asked for indentification at this time). When all fees have been paid, return to the section to get your child, and please inform the caregiver that you are taking him. If you intend to give authorization to any other person to remove your child from the center, that person's name must be entered in the appropriate space on the Health Card. The center will not accept any telephone calls, written notes, etc. for admitting or releasing a child. This is for the child's protection! Please don't be offended.

THE CENTER'S CHILD CARE PROGRAM

INFANT CARE

Age Of Infants: 6 weeks-12 months (or when the child is walking well and sufficiently matured to enter the toddler area). Birth certificates are requested for infants the first time they receive care in the center. We do not accept infants under 6 weeks of age.

Staffing Ratio: 1 caregiver to 5 infants - this is the ratio established by regulation.

Infant Activities: Our infants receive care in a unique area. It is completely self-contained, including a full kitchen facility with feeding area, a diapering area with special "diaper dumpsters" and sinks especially designed so that babies may be bathed safely and with ease. Large sections of the room are carpeted to create a "crawl" area complete with child-sized murals; therefore, infants are not left in cribs except when they need to sleep, but are free to crawl around and discover their world. Adjoining our infant care area is an enclosed porch, a roofed play area and a play yard - all designed specifically for our babies. All infants in our care will be provided opportunities for exercise, large and small muscle development, crawling and exploring, social interaction and the development of communication and self-help skills.

Meals: Although infantsa are fed and given bottles according to individual schedules, mealtimes usually occur between the following hours:

0730-0800	Breakfast
1030-1215	Lunch
1630-1800	Dinner

We do not supply baby food. All food and bottles must be provided by the parent, until the child is able to eat the center's meals. Only sealed (unopened) jars of baby food, labeled with the child's name and date will be accepted. All infant formulas will be in individual, non-breakable bottles, labeled with the child's name and date. Note: no glass bottles are allowed. Because medications are not permitted in the center, medicine may NOT be mixed with formula in baby bottles.

Infants under six months of age will be held during all feedings. The child who is too young to sit in a high chair will be held in a semi-sitting position while being fed solids. Infants over six months of age will be permitted to hold their own bottles, within observation range of a caregiver. Bottles will not be left with infants while they are sleeping.

Diapers: Disposable diapers must be used. The only exception to this rule is in the case of allergy. A physician's statement of allergy presented to the supervisor of the infant care section

will allow use of cloth diapers. Soiled cloth diapers will be immediately placed in a plastic bag without rinsing and sent home with the parents. If the supply of diapers that you bring for your baby is exhausted, disposable diapers will be provided by the center at a charge of 15 cents per diaper.

Diapers are checked at least every 45 minutes for changing. Once asleep, children will not be awakened to be changed. They will be changed if they awaken or exhibit signs of discomfort. The caregiver in the section will be happy to change the child before you leave.

Diaper Bags: Please place extra supplies (bottles, diapers, food, change of clothes, etc.) in a bag. It is nearly impossible to keep track of loose items. Please label all of your possessions so they may be easily identified.

Evening Hours: It is requested that babies brought to the center after 1730 hours be in pajamas.

Note: For safety and health reasons, we ask that you do NOT bring your older children into our infant room. Thanks.

PRETODDLER, TODDLER, PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL-AGE CARE

AGE AND RATIOS IN PRIMARY CARE AREAS

Pretoddlers: Approximately 13-18 months
Ratio by regulation - 1 caregiver to 5 children

Toddlers: Approximately 18 months to 3 years
Ratio by regulation - 1 caregiver to 8 children

Preschoolers: Approximately 3 to 5 years
Ratio by regulation - 1 caregiver to 10 children

School-Agers: Approximately 5 to 12 years
Ratio by regulation - 1 caregiver to 15 children

Daily Program: Our daily schedule can be summed up in one sentence: Arrival and dismissal decided by you, the parent, and essentially self-directed play in between, although there is a very general schedule of activities posted in each area. When the child enters his area, he is given the freedom to explore the various learning activities and interest centers in the area. These centers change from week to week, day to day, and sometimes hour to hour...clay, paint, blocks, musical instruments, dolls, books, special things for special days...and each day is a special day. There are enough activities and interest centers going on at one time that each child is motivated by knowing that he is there. Perhaps a story or quiet music. Or a rhythmic activity and dancing time. Or we go to the courtyard or outdoors to climb, run, jump, or balance on narrow beams. Time to grow...time and space to explore...to discover...to play...to be a child.

Many centers we have visited are neat and orderly, beautifully decorated and lovely. However, it is somewhat distressing when there is no evidence of creative experiences for children. We believe in offering a child the opportunity to "make a mess," to create something that is hers alone, to explore different media and to learn from the opportunity. This does create "clutter." However, the benefits to the child far outweigh the effort required to clean up.

Special Events For Children: Weekly events for children include: Movie Day - complete with popcorn; Career Awareness Programs - visitors discuss their careers, such as a nurse, fire fighter, farmer, cook, dentist; and Tasting Parties - exposure to new and different foods e.g., coconut, mango, rhubarb.

Included in the monthly celebrations are: Birthday Parties - one day per month when the "birthday children" of that month are honored - and Holiday Parties - Valentine's Day, Independence Day, Halloween, Christmas, New Year's Eve, etc.

Held at varied times during the year are field days, junior art week and picnics - which are publicized in the center. Check the calendar in each month's newsletter for our special happenings.

Meals: Nutritious meals are served daily to all children receiving care in the child care center at mealtime. The menus are varied and interesting, including everything from hamburgers to roast chicken to spaghetti, with a vegetable, bread product, dessert and milk completing the meal. Snacks are served mid-morning, mid-afternoon and before bedtime in the evening. Toddlers and juniors are not permitted to bring meals or snacks from home.

0730-0800	Breakfast (all areas)
1130	Pretoddler and Toddler Lunch
1200	Preschool and School-Age Lunch
1800	Dinner (all sections)

Children being fed breakfast should be in the center by 0730; lunch, no later than 1200. Those eating dinner should be in the center no later than 1745 hours.

If your child is to eat during his stay in the center, you must inform the receptionist when your child is checked-in and also the caregiver in your child's section.

Any child whose parents have requested that he not be fed, but is still in the center at mealtime will be fed. If you are not certain of the time you will return for your child, it is advisable to request that he be fed.

Naps/Quiet Times: If your child requires a nap, please inform the caregiver in his section. Approximate nap times are:

13 months - 3 years:	1130-1445
Over 3 years:	1230-1400

For all children who do not require a nap, there is a quiet time in the center. The young child responds best to programs that alternate active play with quiet activities, and we find a quiet period prevents overstimulation and offsets fatigue. Brief periods of "quiet" time are observed following lunch in each section.

PARENT INFORMATION

Clothing: Please bring your child in "play clothes" so that he may feel free to participate in our many activities (e.g., painting, water play) which are not suitable for "better" clothes. For health and safety, children must wear shoes for daytime care (dirt, gravel, sand, stubbed toes). Open sandals are not recommended.

It is requested that toddlers who are brought to the center after 1900 hours be in pajamas. In fact, if your older child who arrives after 1900 hours is not uncomfortable or ill at ease in pajamas and a robe, it is recommended that he be dressed in sleep clothes. It is much easier for you and us if we don't have to search for items of clothing late at night. In the evening, children who are dressed for bed may wear slippers.

We do recommend that a change of clothing - labeled and placed in a bag - be brought for children who may have "accidents." Children who are in training pants and have an accident will be put in diapers or training pants provided by the center, if extra pants have not been supplied by the parent. A charge of 15 cents for diapers or the cost of training pants will be made if the center provides these items. Soiled clothing will be sent home unlaundered and in a plastic bag with the parent.

Label all of your child's sweaters, jackets, hats, etc. so they may be easily identified.

Children's Behavior: If a child proves to be unmanageable or his conduct is such that it interferes with other children, the parent will be contacted and receive a full explanation. The privilege of using the center may be denied to the child who cannot adapt to a group-care situation.

Evening/Night Care: Night time can be a particularly difficult period for a child to be away from parents. Every effort is made to help your child feel comfortable and secure. Your cooperation at night is extremely important. Please use your "quiet" voice when entering a section of sleeping children.

Approximate bedtimes for children are:

Pretoddlers and Toddlers:	2000 hours
Preschool and School-Age:	2030-2100 (week nights)
	2100-2130 (weekends)

All children must be in bed by 2130, regardless of age.

Because it is important to avoid confusion in the center at bedtime, no child will be admitted for child care after 2100 hours.

Child Emergency Procedures: In the event of illness or accident, we must be able to contact you. Please make sure we can locate you, or your representative, whenever you leave your child with us. Know the phone number of your representative who will take the responsibility for your child in the event of an emergency if we are unable to contact you. Please be sure that they know you are giving their phone number to us. Should an illness occur and you are unable to be contacted, your child may be transported to a medical facility for emergency care. If the physicians there do not feel the child needs to be admitted to the hospital, the child will return to the center's isolation room. A staff member will stay with the child during the illness and the added expense of having one staff member with one child will be charged to the parents.

Parent Involvement: The installation child care center is concerned with the total child. We believe that the family is the primary unit of society and the child's first "school."

Because one of our goals is to enhance and support the family, we offer parent involvement meetings frequently. Speakers from the military and civilian community offer workshops and demonstrations which assist parents in teaching and enjoying their children.

Lost Articles: The center is not responsible for lost or misplaced items. However, if the items are labeled, it does make it easier for parents and staff to recognize ownership.

Newsletters/Bulletins: In the lobby of the center there are various informational bulletins and items regarding children. These are free and parents are encouraged to take whatever they wish. The center newsletter is distributed once a month with items of interest, special events, changes in policy and general items of news about our children.

Members Of Organizations: If you belong to an organization that is planning a special event or function, please inform us of the date and time. This enables us to plan our schedule and staff requirements to best meet your needs and the needs of your child.

Special Openings: The child care center may be opened for special occasions by arrangement. Contact the director.

Donations: Because we care for so many children each week, we have a need for usable toys and books. If you have "extras" at your home that your children are no longer playing with or reading, please donate them to our center. They will be put to good use by all the children.

We are also always on the look-out for "dress-up" clothing, for imaginative play - men's and women's - any style, color.

Speaking of imaginative play, we always need anything which can be used in this manner. Anything - milk and egg cartons, yarn, material and cheese cartons, even egg shells! Please bring us your "beautiful junk."

Do you have out-grown children's clothes too good to throw away, but not good enough for the Thrift Shop? If so, we could use them. Our children often have accidents and need a change of clothing.

Center Staff: All of our staff members have had training in child care, first aid, fire prevention and safety. In addition, we work closely with other professionals concerned about quality child care and development.

Visitors/Tours: We encourage parents and guests to visit, observe, and allow us to "show off" the operation of our center. However, if you plan to visit, please come prior to 1700 hours, because our evening hours are filled with dinner, snacks and bedtime procedures. Special tours of the center may be arranged by calling the director.

Suggestion Box: A parent suggestion box and forms are located in our lobby, and we urge you to write down any suggestion that might improve our center. If you have an idea, a criticism or a pat on the back for us, and don't wish or have time to talk it over with the director, please use the suggestion forms to write down what you want to say. Thanks for helping us to better serve you.

Income Tax Receipts: If you plan to claim child care expenses on federal income tax returns, please keep the receipt given to you when you pay for child care.

Parent receiving area

Either a separate space set aside for parents or a partially separated area near the center's reception area helps parents feel welcome and encourages them to talk with other parents and with staff members. Such an area should be well-defined and well-lit with comfortable chairs, a place to sit and write and materials with information about child development and the center's program. Some suggested materials for such a parent area include:

newsletters and publications of organizations concerned with young children

guidelines for helping parents choose appropriate toys, books, movies and television programs for young children

up-to-date clippings on community happenings designed for parents and/or children

copies of the center's parent handbook and other information about the center's program

general information of concern to all parents, such as information on childhood illnesses, home safety, children's product safety and ways to work with young children at home

photographs of children engaged in activities at the center and samples of children's work

special occasion refreshments for parents from time to time

a parent bulletin board which they also can use to post things of interest to other parents or to staff

Parent newsletter or bulletin

A monthly or bi-monthly newsletter or bulletin explaining some aspects of the child care center's program in non-professional language can help parents understand what their children are doing at the center. A parent suggestion or question form can be attached to the newsletter, filled out by parents and left at the center. Then questions can be answered or activities explained in the next newsletter or in person. Ideas or suggestions can be incorporated into the center's program with a "thank you" to the parents.

Parent bulletin board

A bulletin board for parents can be located in the center reception area or in a parent lounge or receiving area. Weekly menus, activity plans for each area of the center, health and safety tips, special events for parents and/or children at the center, and ideas to try at home can be posted on the parent bulletin board. These items should be changed often and kept up-to-date. There also should be space for parents to put their own notes on the board.

FINDING WAYS TO EXCHANGE IDEAS

Informal parent communications

These might be initiated by either the parent or a center staff member. Staff members can send a note, phone a parent, or have a brief exchange at drop-off or pick-up time as a means of making a positive contact with a parent. For example, just letting the parent know when you found their child funny or when she did something interesting or successful during the day can start a conversation relating what goes on in the center with what the child does at home. Also, it gives the parents the security of knowing that someone is paying specific attention to their child. Both the parents and the staff understand the child a little better after they've shared information.

Some centers send a note home with each child daily which lets parents know what the child had to eat or something about the kind of day that the child has had. In particular, in infant care, this type of brief note communication about baby's feeding, diapering, sleep, etc. is an important way to assure communication between parents and staff. Some centers require that parents make notes when they drop infants off each day, letting the staff know the baby's usual schedule or any unusual interruptions which he/she has experienced in the past 24 hours.

If your center users include many working parents, you could arrange to have a parent telephone his or her child during the day on the child's birthday or other special occasion. The child will feel important and the parent will be glad for the center's providing a chance to make contact during the day.

Such informal exchanges and notes are very important bridges between the child's life at the center and at home. They keep parents and caregivers in touch with each other and with the children.

Scheduled parent conferences

Individual parent-staff conferences scheduled on a regular or an as-needed basis can help parents know how their child is developing and can help staff understand parents' expectations and the child's reactions to center life. In addition, such conferences provide parents an opportunity to find out exactly what is going on in the center in some depth. If you plan to schedule individual conferences with parents on a regular basis, you can send a brief newsletter home explaining what individual conferences are and what they can accomplish.

Many individual conferences are held to solve a problem or to ward off a potential problem. It is important never to put the parent on the defensive in such situations. Staff need to be made aware that a parent may insist that the problem is minor or that it is the result of a staff member's not knowing how to handle a child. These are common protective reactions. Staff should try to listen carefully to parents' suggestions, offer suggestions themselves, suggest referral to special services if they do not know how to handle the situation or how to help parents with a solution and make arrangements to follow through with whatever is mutually agreed upon.

Parent small-group conferences

One very enjoyable and effective way to encourage communication among parents and between parents and staff is to invite three or four parents to a small group conference. The conference agenda may simply be for each parent to describe a situation which bothers her/him with her/his own child. The situations - which usually are recognized by other parents - are discussed freely with suggestions made by the other parents and by staff members.

Sometimes an "expert" can be invited to lead a discussion for the small group on a topic which the parents may select beforehand. These small-group conferences are particularly good for parents who are uneasy in either an individual conference or a large group situation.

All-parent meetings

Many early childhood programs have a fall orientation session for parents who will be enrolling children. In many military centers which offer drop-in care, it is not possible to hold one large meeting which could include all center users at the time of their children's enrollment. However, regularly scheduled meetings could be held throughout the year. Whenever such an all-center meeting is held, it is an excellent means of establishing a cooperative relationship between parents and staff and for parents to get acquainted with each other.

A major purpose of such a meeting is to provide parents with a full understanding of the center's program and services. The center director and other staff should explain the center's program in an interesting way. Written, take-home materials usually are appreciated by parents, and time should be provided to answer their questions about center policies and programs.

This type of meeting will permit you to show off your center, show children's displays, center interest areas, schedules, and so forth. It also provides a good opportunity to recruit volunteers and to get a sample of parents' opinions and ideas for improving the program.

INVOLVING PARENTS IN DECISION-MAKING

Center advisory board or committee

Many child care centers and early childhood programs include parents and other community representatives as members of planning and advisory groups. It is usual that the persons who make up a center advisory group are persons interested in the services provided by the center and who also are willing to give time to supply the expertise needed for decision-making.

For a military center's advisory board, it would be appropriate to include such interested "expert" representatives as a Community Health Nurse, a Dietitian, a Fire Department representative and a pediatrician. In addition, parents who use the center and who also represent a group of families on the installation are a valuable addition to such an advisory body. For example, a center user who is a member of the Non-Commissioned Officers' Wives' Club, the Officers' Wives' Club, a single parent group, a minority group organization or a handicapped dependent family support group would be an excellent addition to a center advisory group. If you can get support from members of an authorized enlisted, Non-Commissioned Officers' or Officers' group, these are valuable additions as well.

Standing committees and "disappearing" committees

The major advisory board often makes a practice of establishing a number of standing committees. These committees usually involve more people than are on the board itself, and take on tasks needed by the center. Such committees are logical and important places to involve parents.

It also is appropriate and useful to call together "disappearing" committees whose service may be needed for a limited time period to give some advice on one aspect of center operations. For example, if you have a large number of children for whom English is a second language, you may want to call together an advisory committee of their parents to seek enough volunteers or staff who speak those other languages to assist the children and to represent the other languages in the center's total program.

A "disappearing" advisory group of parents of school-age children using the center could be called together to recruit volunteers who could provide craft instruction or some other after-school activity of interest to the particular children involved.

Parent suggestions, ideas and contributions

In addition to these more formal ways to involve parents in planning and influencing the center program, opinions and suggestions received at parent suppers or large group meetings, suggestions from the suggestion box or informal recommendations made during conversations with the director or the staff can be built into the center's program. Whether the families who use the center are involved as an AUDIENCE, as VOLUNTEERS, as STAFF MEMBERS, as DECISION-MAKERS, or as all of these, they are valuable partners in the center's efforts to provide appropriate, enriched child care which reflects the values and priorities of the community which it serves.

MAKING THE CENTER A FAMILY RESOURCE

Recent literature has recognized that becoming a parent is one of the normal developmental crises in a person's life history. There are new stresses and responsibilities associated with the "parenting" phase of life, as well as new pleasures, satisfactions and learnings. How parents cope with or enjoy parenthood has a lot to do with their experiences with their own parents and other important adults. Also, all adults raising children need certain supports, both psychological and physical, if they are to be effective. In the past, many of these supports came from the extended family. Today, particularly in the military family, this family network of siblings, aunts and uncles and grandparents often is not available nearby to provide this needed support and education.

Child child providers should expect that parents will have various levels of expertise as parents and that they, like their children, will need support and assistance in coping with parenthood. Child care programs should provide well designed and sensitively offered services supportive of family development if they are to achieve a program of high quality services to children.

UNDERSTANDING PARENTS' NEEDS

Parents often ask caregivers and center directors for advice on handling child behavior or for a good book on childrearing. Quality child care centers serve as a resource for families, beyond their role of providing care for children. In fact, most quality centers recognize the value of this expanded role in building the center-home partnership. The benefits of this relationship are great for both sides of the partnership. Parents have a place to meet others who share their interest in childrearing, the center benefits from the improved public relations when parents are well served, and the children benefit from the close contact between home and center.

Frequently - and this is particularly true of families in the military - center users are young families with little experience in childrearing and with no extended family network nearby to provide information and support for their efforts. The child care center may be the *only* contact that such young families have with professionals and other persons who understand their concerns about parenting. It is easy to see, then, why the center is such a natural focus for parents seeking information and assistance.

The amount of time and effort that a center devotes to its role as a family resource varies greatly. It is clear, however, that whether a center plans for this role or ignores it, parents use center staff and contacts as resources. Any program which has as its objective the development of the whole child and which recognizes the community relations aspects of offering parents something for themselves, does not ignore this role as a family resource.

As the checklist on the following page reveals, there are many ways that a center can serve as a resource for families. The various types of parent involvement discussed in the last section - informal conversations, observing caregivers working with children, planned conferences, a parent lounge, large and small group meetings with staff, volunteering and acting as advisory board members - all offer parents opportunities to meet and talk with other parents and with center staff. Many questions and concerns can be dealt with in these parent-staff contacts.

LOOKING AT YOUR CENTER AS A FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE - A CHECKLIST

The checklist below includes some objectives and specific ways that a child care center can serve the whole child better by supporting family life. Check those ways that your center supports families on a regular basis. Now look at those which you haven't checked and give them some thought. Could you provide more support to families by involving other resources on the installation or in the nearby community?

In a program supportive of families, a center's goals should,

- enable parents to learn about the goals of the child care center and the purpose of the daily activities. _____
- enable parents to understand the developmental needs of their children at various stages and ways that they can encourage development. _____
- enable parents to recognize and handle common problems of childhood, including identifying the community resources available to them. _____
- enable parents to become more comfortable with their role as parents.
- enable parents to work with the knowledge that their children are receiving the care and other services necessary for healthy development. _____

The objectives of a family support program can be realized through,

- informal, daily conversations with caregivers or with the center director about their children and child-rearing. _____
- parent observation of children's activities in the center which is encouraged and discussed with staff. _____
- planned conferences with the director, caregivers, nurse, social worker or a consultant as needed. _____
- regular parent group meetings. _____
- educational materials such as books, filmstrips, or pamphlets which are available to parents in an obvious place within the center. _____
- special parent education sessions on various topics of concern to parents sponsored by the center on a regular basis. _____
- toys and children's books lending library for use by families using the center. _____
- referrals made to homemakers, home economists, visiting nurses and social workers who can make home visits. _____
- escort service to school, pediatrician or other community resource available if both parents are employed. _____
- list of sources of emergency care, overnight care or care for mildly ill children available to parents at the center. _____
- center space and/or organizational effort for parent support activities such as Parents Anonymous or Parents Without Partners. _____

The importance of these various formal and informal situations in the center for providing parents with needed contacts and information was confirmed recently in a study conducted at the University of North Carolina.[1] The survey of more than one thousand families revealed that parents feel they need information on both the facts of child development and on techniques and skills for working with young children. It also revealed that parents prefer to turn to family and friends for information on children's problems and ways to manage the child's environment. After family and friends, "social agencies" received high priority as a source of information on family problems. For specific facts about child development and child health, doctors, nurses and books are the preferred source of information.

It is worth noting that, overall, "books" was usually the second or third preference as a source of information after "people." What this means, of course, is that family and friends and people working in the child care center are important and trusted sources of information sought out by parents. This is the reason that parent discussion groups, caregiver-parent conversations and parent meetings with other family-related professionals are such an important part of the child care center's overall role as a family resource.

In addition to those parent involvements discussed earlier, there are some other ways that a center might choose to support the families of children in care. These other family support services could include,

a lending library for toys

a lending library for parent education information

formal parent workshops/programs

information and referral services for parents

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[1]"Parents Want To Know," *Children Today*. (July-August, 1979), p. 30.

DEVELOPING LENDING LIBRARIES FOR PARENTS

A good idea used by some successful programs to support families in their childrearing efforts is the creation of resource lending libraries for center users. Toys are becoming increasingly expensive and less durable. Many parents cannot keep up with outgrown or broken toys. Children often tire of a toy long before it has had its full use. A toy-lending library makes it possible for parents to provide appropriate toys for each stage of a child's development. This gives children experience and pleasure in playing with well-designed, well-constructed toys which otherwise they may not have had. It also encourages mutual sharing and responsibilities between parents and children in selecting and caring for borrowed items. Similarly, with the abundance of reading material being produced on various aspects of parenting, parents seek guidance in what to select. Books also are expensive and may be used only once or twice to provide certain needed information. If a center has lending library of appropriate and well-selected materials on parenting, center users can borrow one or more books which have been chosen for their quality.

Toy-lending library

Putting together and operating a toy-lending library is an excellent parent volunteer project. The library does not require a lot of space. A large walk-in closet or the corner of an office will do. The library can be developed by parent or Thrift Shop contributions of used toys. Money for purchase can be raised through fund-raising efforts by private associations on the installation. Toys should be selected carefully by a caregiver/parent committee to reflect the life at the center. If possible, they should be similar to toys used in the center to reinforce what the center is trying to help the child learn. The library need be open only a few hours each week during times when parents are likely to be at the center. Experience indicates that parents are conscientious about returning toys, especially if they have been a part of the decision-making process. The following tips have made the operation of one center's toy library quite easy:

keep index cards that a) identify children borrowing each toy, b) record the life of each toy and c) indicate the child-appeal of each toy.

mark every part of every toy with an identification number.

send toys home in a bag clearly labeled with the exact contents to assist parents in collecting the parts or pieces for return.

Library of parenting information

Putting together a lending library of books and newsletters for parents also is a very good volunteer project. If your center has a parent lounge, that would be the ideal place to locate such a library. If not, your center's entryway could be the location for a library. You could arrange shelves in the entry area at about parent's eye-level. Since there often is a table or place for parents to write in this entry area, it would not be difficult to have the books signed out on cards and the cards deposited in a small box nearby.

What belongs in a parenting library? A study conducted by the University of North Carolina revealed that when parents were asked to rate their interest in reading 50 articles concerning children, the following titles were among those selected first.[2]

Building Your Child's Self-Confidence
The Sick Child: What To Do
Prepare Your Child For Learning
How Mental Abilities Develop In Children

Parents of very young children were most interested in answers to questions about toilet training, what a baby means when he cries, and how parents can get more time for themselves.

There are three easy-to-recognize themes or areas of parenting materials which can help parents cope with their roles as parents and with childrearing. Books and newsletters addressing these themes should be included in a parenting lending library.[3]

Psychology of Parenting - Materials in this group are directed at adults who have become mothers or fathers. They tend to bolster confidence by dealing with the common worries, anxieties and doubts that plague most parents.

Child development - In this area are materials which describe how children grow from infancy to childhood. They let parents know what to expect, how children respond in different environments and at different ages, and generally, help parents feel more confident about what they are seeing.

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[2] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

[3] S. Anselmo and C. D. Cary, "A Lending Library In Parenting," *Day Care And Early Education*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Fall, 1977) pp. 15-18.

Interactions between parents and children - These materials include practical suggestions on how parents should and should not treat children. They recommend ways to handle situations involving children of various ages and they talk about the results of various types of parent/child interactions.

The Basic Bookshelf for a parent lending library on the following page costs about $100. If your center is planning a lending library for parents, you may want to begin with such a Basic Bookshelf and add to it as you are able. There are many, many books available on parenting, child development and parent/child interactions. You may want to have parent volunteers review this list and review many other books before making a selection of books for your basic bookshelf. The books on this list are some which parents in programs with which we have had experience have found to be very useful. A helpful comprehensive index of parenting materials, including audio-visual materials, is prepared and updated on a periodic basis by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. For information on the index, which costs about $5.00, write PMIC-SEDL, 211 East 7th Street, Austin, TX 78701.

In addition to this Basic Bookshelf, you may want to subscribe to a few newsletter-type publications which are designed specifically for parents. Three excellent publications of this sort which you may want to review are

Growing Child
22 North Second Street
Lafayette, IN 47902

Parent Talk
P. O. Box 572
Scottsdale, AZ 85252

Pierre The Pelican Newsletters
Dr. Lloyd W. Rowland
Family Publications Center
P. O. Box 15690
New Orleans, LA 70175

A BASIC PARENTING BOOKSHELF

Ackerman, Paul, PhD &
Kappelman, Murray, M.D.
Signals: What Your Child Is Really Telling You, 1978
278 pp. - $2.50
PARENT/CHILD INTERACTIONS
The New American Library
1633 Broadway
New York, NY 10019

American Library Association
Let's Read Together: Books For Family Enjoyment, 1969
116 pp. - $2.00
PARENTING
Order Department
American Library Association
50 E. Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611

Boston Children's Medical Center And
Gregg, Elizabeth M.
What To Do When 'There's Nothing To Do', 1972
158 pp. - $4.50
PARENT/CHILD INTERACTIONS
Delacorte Press
One Dag Hammarskjold Plaza
245 E. 47th Street
New York, NY 10017

Brazelton, T. Berry, M.D.
Infants And Mothers: Differences In Development, 1969
295 pp. - $9.00 (hardback) $4.95 (paper)
PARENT/CHILD INTERACTIONS
Delacorte Press
One Dag Hammarskjold Plaza
245 E. 47th Street
New York, NY 10017

Brazelton, T. Berry, M.D.
Toddlers And Parents, 1974
250 pp. - $10.00
PARENT/CHILD INTERACTIONS
Delacorte Press
One Dag Hammarskjold Plaza
245 E. 47th Street
New York, NY 10017

Briggs, Dorothy C.
Your Child's Self-Esteem: The Key To His Life, 1970
341 pp. - $6.95
CHILD DEVELOPMENT
Doubleday & Company
245 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Caplan, F. (Ed.)
The First Twelve Months Of Life: Your Baby's Growth Month By Month, 1973
252 pp. - $7.95
CHILD DEVELOPMENT
Grosset & Dunlap
51 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10010

Crary, E.
Without Spanking Or Spoiling, 1979
102 pp. - $5.95
PARENT/CHILD INTERACTIONS
Parenting Press
7750 31st. Avenue, NE
Seattle, WA 98115

Dodson, Fitzhugh
How To Father, 1974
535 pp. - $9.00 (hard) $1.95 (paper)
PARENTING
Nash Publishing Corporation
One Dupont Street
Plainview, NY 11803

Dodson, Fitzhugh
How To Parent, 1970
444 pp. - $7.95 (hard) $1.50 (paper)
PARENTING
Nash Publishing Corporation
One Dupont Street
Plainview, NY 11803

Dreikurs, Rudolph
Children: The Challenge, 1964
303 pp. - $2.95
PARENT/CHILD INTERACTIONS
Hawthorne Books, Inc.
260 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10016

Dreikurs, Rudolph
Coping With Children's Misbehavior: A Parent's Guide, 1972
162 pp. - $2.95
PARENT/CHILD INTERACTIONS
Hawthorne Books, Inc.
260 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10016

Ginott, Haim
Between Parent And Child, 1965
223 pp. - $6.00 (hard) $1.50 (paper)
PARENT/CHILD INTERACTIONS
MacMillan Pub. Company, Inc.
866 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Gordon, Ira J.
Baby Learning Through Baby Play: A Parent's Guide For The First Two Years, 1970
121 pp. - $7.95 (hard) $3.95 (paper)
PARENT/CHILD INTERACTIONS
St. Martin's Press
175 Fifth Street
New York, NY 10010

Gordon, Ira J., et al
Child Learning Through Child Play: Learning Activities For Two And Three Year Olds, 1972
116 pp. - $7.95 (hard) $3.95 (paper)
PARENT/CHILD INTERACTIONS
St. Martin's Press
175 Fifth Street
New York, NY 10010

Gordon, Thomas
Parent Effectiveness Training, 1970
338 pp. - $8.00
PARENT/CHILD INTERACTIONS
Peter H. Wyden Books, Inc.
750 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Green, Martin I.
A Sigh Of Relief: The First Aid Handbook For Childhood Emergencies, 1977
199 pp. - $6.95
PARENTING
Bantam Books, Inc.
666 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10019

Houghton-Mifflin Company
Your Child And Reading: How You Can Help
14 pp. - $.21
PARENT/CHILD INTERACTIONS
Houghton-Mifflin Company
1900 S. Batavia Avenue
Geneva, IL 60134

Hughes, Kathryne S.
Education For Effective Parenthood, 1969
24 pp. - $1.00
PARENTING
National Education Assoc. Order Dept.
The Academic Building
Saw Mill Road
West Haven, CT 06516

Lansky, Vicki
Feed Me! I'm Yours!, 1974
118 pp. - $3.50
PARENTING
Meadowbrook Press
16648 Meadowbroo Lane
Wayzata, MN 55391

LeShan, Eda
How To Survive Parenthood, 1973
269 pp. - $1.50
PARENTING
Warner Books, Inc.
75 Rockafeller Plaza
New York, NY 10019

Mayer, Greta & Hoover, Mary
When Children Need Special Help With Emotional Problems
30 pp. - $1.25 (plus .25 postage)
PARENT/CHILD INTERACTIONS
Child Study Press
50 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10010

National Education Assoc.
How To Listen To Your Child And How To Get Your Child To Listen To You, 1971
14 pp. - $2.00/30cy
PARENT/CHILD INTERACTIONS
National Education Assoc.
Order Department
The Academic Building
Saw Mill Road
West Haven, CT 06516

National Education Assoc.
Reading: Parents Can Help
7 pp. - $1.50
PARENT/CHILD INTERACTIONS
National Education Assoc.
Order Department
The Academic Building
Saw Mill Road
West Haven, CT 06516

Salk, Lee, PhD
What Every Child Would Like His Parents To Know, 1972
222 pp. - $1.50
PARENTING
Warner Books, Inc.
75 Rockerfeller Plaza
New York, NY 10019

Salk, Lee, & Kramer, Rita
How To Raise A Human Being, 1975
204 pp. - $1.50
PARENTING
Warner Books, Inc.
75 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, NY 10019

Spock, Benjamin
Baby And Child Care, 1976 (Rev. Ed.)
666 pp. - $4.95
PARENTING
Pocket Books, Inc.
1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

U.S. Office Dept. of Health and Human Services
A Parent's Guide To Day Care, 1980
DHHS Pub. No. (OHDS) 80-30254
74 pp. - nominal cost
PARENTING
Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, DC 20402

U.S. Office of Child Development
Safe Toys For Your Child - How To Select Them - How To Use Them Safely
$.20
PARENTING
Superintendent of Documents
Children's Bureau Publication
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, DC 20402

U.S. Office of Child Development
Your Child From One To Six, 1962
97 pp. $1.10
CHILD DEVELOPMENT
Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, DC 20402

U.S. Office of Child Development
Your Child From Six To Twelve, 1970
99 pp. - $1.55
CHILD DEVELOPMENT
Consumer Information
Public Documents Distribution Center
Pueblo, CO 81009

White, Burton L.
The First Three Years Of Life, 1975
285 pp. - $10.00
CHILD DEVELOPMENT
Prentice-Hall, Inc.
Englewood Cliffs
New Jersey 07632

PROVIDING OTHER SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Parent workshops and information sharing

A program designed especially for parents can help them understand better the developmental needs of children, the various stages of child development, some ways to cope with common childhood problems, and their own roles as parents in helping their children learn and grow. In addition, a program designed for parents can help them learn more about child care services and the reasons behind the kinds of activities and experiences which the center provides for their children. Perhaps most importantly, a parent program can offer opportunities for exchange and discussion among parents and with staff.

Parenting is not easy nor does it necessarily come "naturally." Effective parenting requires teaching skills, human relations skills, and good information about available resources, nutrition, childhood illnesses, and many other things. Most parents are not prepared by their formal education to guide young children in positive ways nor to understand how a young child develops. Therefore, most are familiar only with the ways that their parents raised them. This may or may not be the way they would choose to raise their own children if they had other information available about child development and child guidance. A center which offers a parent program is providing a lasting and important service which can only strengthen the center/home link and support the opportunity for more children to get a good beginning.

Parent workshops offered at the center are one effective means to help parents gain some of this information and the skills needed to parent effectively. Some centers offer a series of workshops on a monthly or twice monthly basis or for six to ten weeks in a row. It has been found that a series of related workshops or seminars is more effective than conducting single, unconnected sessions.

The content of these parent workshops should be designed to provide the fundamental information and skills needed to work with children of all ages. It is very important that parents be involved in setting the objectives of the program and letting workshop planners know their interests and concerns. This will assure that the workshops will be responsive to their needs.

Some topics for consideration in developing a workshop program include

patterns of growth and development
communicating with children
how to handle difficult behavior
parents as teachers
building your child's self-esteem
non-sexist, non-racist programs for young children
talking about death and divorce
your child's language development
creative projects for parents and children
good books for young children

By keeping workshops informal, parents have a chance to ask questions and to get to know each other. Give each parent a name tag. If possible arrange seating in an unbroken circle. This face-to-face seating fosters comfortable interaction and full group participation. Whoever leads the group should indicate clearly that every parent contribution is meaningful to the group by nodding approval to parent contributions and encouraging discussion and questions.

Some things that you can do to enhance your parent workshops include:[4]

Incorporate relevant, concrete experiences into your workshops whenever possible in order to reinforce learning. For example, read children's stories, set up "hands-on" creative art experiences, let parents role play situations.

Invite resource guests whose expertise can contribute to a particular workshop. For example, invite a Parent Effectiveness Training (PET) teacher to discuss "Communication Skills" or a pediatrician to discuss "Childhood Health and Illness."

Use films or filmstrips if audio-visual equipment is available. For example, *Separation/Divorce* by CRM/McGraw-Hill Films, Del Mar, California or *The Minority Child* by Parents' Magazine Films, New York, NY.

Open personal lines of communication with each parent. Have brief conversations before or after parent meetings or at a coffee break.

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[4]Edith Barnes, "A Guide For Parent Workshops," *Day Care And Early Education*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Fall, 1978), pp. 36-42.

Provide reference books and/or bibliographies at workshops. The books in a parenting library could be highlighted at workshops to interest parents in borrowing them and reading more about it. The modules in the Military Child Care Project's Child Guidance series (*Caring For Infants*, etc.) also could be of interest to parents.

Remember, parents want to help their children learn and grow. If offered the means to acquire new skills and information, they will be able to do this. It is hoped that these suggestions will encourage you to explore the development of parent and family support programs at your center.

Information and referral services

Most child care centers don't have the staff or the facility to offer many social services directly to parents. Some centers do offer dental checkups and fluoride treatments for children with a dentist who volunteers his or her time to the center. Others may have a social work intern who works out of the center a day a week with parents of children in care. These kinds of social services vices are important and should be explored by the creative center director.

Even if you don't have the time to find ways of bringing these services to the center, you will discover that many parents could benefit greatly simply by receiving information about and referral to community services. As you talk with parents informally, you will often discover that they need services which you know are offered in the community. In this information and referral process, social services must be offered in a sensitive way so that parents or families are not offended. Tact and respect are required when such information is given, but you will find that it usually is gratefully received by parents who may not know where to turn. In the military setting so many services are available on the installation that forming linkages with these personnel is easy and can offer parents important help.

These are only a few of the ways in which centers can offer support to the families. Such supportive services are important and can do much to strengthen the parent/center relationship. Consider how your center can help support the young military families whose children are in your care.

USING VOLUNTEERS EFFECTIVELY

In general, people do not commit themselves to programs in which they are not involved. This is true of parents whose children use a child care center, of employees who are not allowed to be involved in decision-making, and of volunteers who are donating their time to a program which underestimates their worth and abilities or which does not include them as an integral part of the center's team.

If child care centers are to become a focus for community and installation support, it is important that parents, employees, and volunteers be given a chance to become really involved in the center's program. Rather than limiting children's contacts outside of the child care center, a center should involve the men and women, youngsters and elders, who are a part of the community. In doing so, the center should let them be involved in meaningful ways which enrich both their lives and the lives of the children.

The key to developing a good volunteer program is good management. It does not matter how small your center is nor how few volunteers you may have, if the program is to be successful, each volunteer must have the opportunity to be involved in specific, meaningful activity. Each must feel needed and appreciated. Each must be able to see some benefits as a result of the time invested. A good manager gets her or his work done by getting other people to do their work. Volunteers in a child care center can contribute greatly to a center's program and make up for the fact that there often are not enough staff to provide a really enriched environment for young children. With good management and respect for volunteer efforts, parents and other volunteers can enrich the environment of a child care center and help your program reach its goals for young children.

DEVELOPING A VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

There are many ways for parents and other interested community members to become involved in a child care center as a volunteer. Many parents enjoy working regularly in the center program or helping with children's parties or field trips. Some centers, like parent co-operatives, depend on the help provided by parents. Often parents enjoy the feeling of partnership with the teacher when they work in the center. They usually are surprised and pleased to find that their own children get so much satisfaction when they are participating.

Other volunteers from the community can do most things that parents can do in a center and they often have more free time than parents with young families or working parents. However, since they do not have the reward of seeing their own children in the center as they participate, it is doubly important that the center staff make them feel very welcome, define their tasks clearly, and let them know how much their services are appreciated.

Volunteers can be valuable additions to a child care center in many ways in addition to direct participation with the children. However, a successful parent and volunteer program requires some training and management. The center staff must be committed to the program and give it the attention it requires if it is to succeed. Recruiting, training and supervising volunteers can be a time-consuming job. This job usually falls upon the already-busy director's shoulders. This may explain the fact that many child care centers do not use volunteers or, at least, use them only occasionally and in fairly limited roles. In some military centers the director takes advantage of the formal volunteer programs on the installation to get already trained volunteers into the center. Red Cross and Community/Family Services volunteer programs often can provided needed volunteer services to a child care center.

An alternative to the director's managing the volunteer program is the use of a Volunteer Coordinator. This could be either a member of the center staff who is willing to assume the responsibility or it could be a volunteer who is interested and willing to organize and manage the program for the center. Using volunteers for some of these organizational tasks is an excellent idea. Many volunteers are quite skilled and would enjoy organizing and managing such a program.

Encouraging the creation of a volunteer program in a child care center also calls for a word of caution. In many centers there will be people who, for various reasons, will offer their services. This can be very helpful. On the other hand, more than one director who has encouraged an interested volunteer has found the situation to be undesirable and has had difficulty getting out of it. It is best to look at any volunteer with the same care that you would use when employing a staff member. Because volunteers may be in close contact with young children and with your center program, you should have a good recruitment, screening, training, supervision and evaluation process for all volunteers.

PLANNING FOR THE USE OF VOLUNTEERS

Beginning a volunteer program will take some planning on the part of your child care center staff. Before you begin, you and your staff will have to put a lot of thought into answering some basic questions. Your program will run more smoothly if you set down your goals and your expectations at the beginning. Remember, volunteers are more than extra hands to do some of the least favorite tasks around the center and more than a lap to sit on. They are parents and community residents who are volunteering to contribute their time and talents to your program. They need positive reinforcement and interesting things to do just as much as you and your staff do. As you think through the kinds of enrichment that volunteers could add to your center, or the kinds of tasks that might help with the overall center operation, try them on for size. How would you enjoy spending your time? Are these tasks in some way meaningful or interesting? Consider these additional questions:

What do you hope that parents or other volunteers will contribute?

How do you plan to incorporate volunteers into your daily or weekly plans?

Who will be responsible for recruiting, training and managing volunteers in your center?

Can you and your staff be flexible enough to include each parent or volunteer who "drops-in" unexpectedly?

Do most of the things that you would like volunteers to do involve child contact time or are they organizational tasks?

Are you flexible enough to let the volunteer choose activities which interest him/her?

Does your staff feel comfortable about using volunteers in their rooms?

What will the children in the center gain?

In what ways will the parents or volunteers benefit?

Since military installations have formal volunteer recruitment and training organizations in the Red Cross and the Family/Community Services branch you may want to work with them to design specific volunteer task descriptions. In this way, the volunteer organization could take over some of the legwork required in recruiting and training for some of the center's volunteer positions. For example, there are several organizational activities which most centers may or may not have the time or the interest to develop. In these cases, when the tasks DO NOT REPLACE THE WORK OF A PAID STAFF MEMBER and DO NOT SUBSTITUTE FOR A JOB WHICH IS ESSENTIAL TO ADEQUATE PROGRAM COVERAGE, you may want to develop a volunteer position to enrich the center. The following potential volunteer positions may be ones that you could coordinate with your installation's formal volunteer programs:

Parent Coordinator

Specific duties for a *Parent Coordinator* might include:

Identify parent interests and skills.

Coordinate center parent education program.

Work directly with parents and center staff to develop center parent activities, meetings and programs.

Identify and develop information on community resources and services available to parents.

Work with staff to develop bulletins, newsletters and bulletin boards for parents.

Assist in recruiting, training and referring parent volunteers.

Make home vists and establish personal contact with parents as appropriate or helpful.

Serve as a bridge between parents and staff, and center and community.

Serve as a resource to center advisory committees and parent advisory group.

Coordinate center orientation sessions and tours for new center users.

Assist center staff in the preparation or revision of a Parent Handbook which informs parents of their rights and responsibilities in the center program.

Organize and supervise a toy and book-lending library for use by families using the center.

Volunteer Coordinator

Specific duties of a *Volunteer Coordinator* might include:

Work with staff to identify roles within the center or in support of the center program which volunteers could perform.

Recruit and train volunteers from among parents and other interested community members to work in the center's program.

Work with center staff in staff meetings and informally on ways to use and to work with volunteers in their areas.

Schedule volunteer participation in the center and set up necessary instructions or aids for their use.

Be responsible for the supervision and record-keeping responsibilities connected with the volunteer program.

Serve as a public relations bridge between the center and the installation community and, in particular, between the center and other volunteer agencies.

Develop a Volunteer Handbook especially for volunteers who are working with young children and staff in the child care program.

Make volunteers feel welcome and important and assure the recognition of their efforts.

Resource Coordinator

Specific duties of a *Resource Coordinator* might include:

Set up equipment and supply card file as well as a maintenance schedule for large equipment and room furnishings. Take regularly scheduled inventory.

Maintain library of toy and equipment catalogs and creative ideas for homemade toys which volunteers might want to contribute.

Develop files of pictures or collections of poems, fingerplays, recipes, or curriculum "kits" which can be used by caregivers in their program plans.

Assemble samples of children's work and arrange special displays throughout the center.

Work with staff to develop a "wish list" of resources which could benefit the program.

Develop resources in the larger community who can donate or supply some of the items on the "wish lists."

Program Enrichment Coordinator

Specific duties of a *Program Enrichment Coordinator* might include:

Set up a card file which includes the names, phone numbers and explanations of special talents or skills of persons or agencies which have expressed an interest in or who have in the past provided a special activity or program for the center.

Work with caregivers to schedule the involvement of these special resource persons in their areas.

Be responsible for working with staff to develop center "special events" such as visits by zookeepers or other people, picnics, carnivals or career week. Follow through by setting up the event.

Maintain a file of good children's films available for use by the center and schedule showings.

Work with staff to develop special activities for the after school program such as short-term craft classes, special field trips or nature walks.

Work with staff to develop staff and volunteer resource card file of creative ideas for projects and activities for the various age groups served by the center.

Set up a staff resource corner somewhere in the center and a staff lending library for activities materials.

Serve as an extra helper with children on the days that special activities or projects are planned.

Administrative Aide

Specific duties of an *Administrative Aide* might include:

Assist with the collection and preparation of data for center internal control, installation or service-wide reports or surveys, Department of Agriculture food program reports, or special studies of center use as requested by the director.

Review children's health information and enrollment information cards to assure that all are complete and up-to-date.

Answer center phones during particularly busy times.

Work with director to keep center files up-to-date and filing done.

Type ditto masters and do other necessary center typing involved in ordering supplies, equipment, correspondence or revising handbooks.

Assist with the development and implementation of filing and record-keeping systems and other management tools which would help the center improve its administrative system.

Provide center users with information, Parent Handbooks and conduct center tours.

Personal Attention Aide

Specific duties of a volunteer working with children to provide one-to-one personalized attention could include:

Systematically work with *individual* children for 20 to 30 minutes each on a private, personal basis. Special activities could include

informal conversations
helping with a special project of interest
rocking child in a rocking chair
taking a walk/pushing a stroller
working on conversational English with bilingual child
reading a story together
rubbing a child's back at nap time
writing a story or letter with a child by taking dictation
making a scrapbook of favorite pictures with a child
showing affection and appreciation
other homelike, private, caring activities.

Small-Group, Free-Play Aide

Specific duties of a volunteer who works with small groups of children might include:

Supervise free-play activities for small groups of children both indoors and out, e.g., stay near the slide, swings, indoor small toys table or crawl area.

Help set up interesting things which children could choose to play with, then talk with, assist or observe the children as they play.

Help children develop their interests and encourage them to solve problems, learn independence and make choices.

Act as a human relations guide for informal small groups by assisting them with personal or interpersonal difficulties in a gentle, guiding way.

Play games with small group which teach cooperation, turn-taking or some other social, physical or intellectual skill.

Help serve lunch and snacks and sit with children for informal conversation at mealtime.

These are just a few of the extra jobs which are often difficult to accomplish due to lack of specialized staff and money to hire extra staff. Some of these "positions" could be broken into several parts and several volunteers could share the responsibilities involved. In addition, there are many other things which volunteers could do with children in the center, depending upon their interests and skills. The kinds of tasks described above could easily lend themselves to formalized volunteer positions which you may want to develop with your Family/Community Services volunteer program.

RECRUITING

In thinking about a volunteer program, you might assume that most center users are parents who need to find some time for themselves away from their children. In centers on military installations most center users probably are working parents. Those who aren't and who use the center may feel that a high degree of education is required or that they are too busy and don't have the time. It is for this reason that developing a volunteer program requires creativity in capturing the interest of parents and the wider community.

As you become more experienced you will find it easier to convince parents of their worth to you and to the center. Perhaps the best way to get people interested in volunteering is to get them to visit the center and stay awhile so that they can see in what ways they can be of help. The following are some suggestions for encouraging parents to get involved.[1]

Set aside an entire day each week when parents are encouraged to visit the center and observe the program. Plan things for that day which allow the children to work fairly independently so that caregivers will have time to talk with parents or which involve tasks which a parent could imagine helping with.

Have a Zoo Day on which children are encouraged to bring a pet from home. Send a note and invitation to parents about a week in advance with a specified time, say 10-11 a.m., during which pets should be brought to the center, along with a few rules about keeping pets in cages or on a leash. Since the pets are only to stay for an hour, parents will need to attend in order for their children to participate.

Set aside a whole week as HOBBY WEEK, CAREER WEEK, or CULTURE WEEK and encourage parents to come and share samples of their hobbies, describe their jobs, or bring costumes or foods from their native countries or photographs and family recipes from their own family history. Send home an invitation to parents along with a tear-off sheet to be returned if the parents want to participate.

Plan an activity, such as a short play or production, in which each child will take part or in which the children's work will be on special display. Few parents can resist coming to see their children perform or to see their work. Set up a parent corner for the visitors with information on volunteering in the center.

Send out invitations to parents to come to a tea party or to an evening spaghetti and salad dinner party. Let the children make all of the invitations, placemats, decorations, prepare the food and serve it. Invitations should be sent home and a reply requested.

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[1]Some of these ideas are adapted from suggestions in the excellent book, *Parents And Volunteers In The Classroom: A Handbook For Teachers*, by Bette Miller and Ann L. Wilmshurst.

An evening dinner party is likely to be welcomed in particular by those working parents for whom it would be difficult or impossible to attend during the day. When parents come you can explain your cooking plans for the year and sign up volunteers who will come and demonstrate special foods or help with cooking projects.

Many centers invite a child's parent to visit on her/his birthday. This gives you a chance to get to know the parent and his/her interests and makes the day very special for the child.

The sections of this Administrative Guidebook on *Managing Child Care Centers* and *Installation Resources Available To Military Child Care Programs* have emphasized the importance of good community relations and becoming familiar with all of the resources available to you on the installation. As director of the child care center, the things that you do to increase your visibility and create a positive image of the center also will contribute to efforts to recruit volunteers from the larger community. Some of the things which you could do that would generate interest in volunteering include

Sponsor an Open House at the center.

Offer educational programs in the evening or on a weekend at the center to which the public is invited.

Offer to speak to community organizations, Wives' Clubs, and other groups, regardless of size.

Offer children's art to be displayed in the exchange, commissary or library during days or weeks devoted to children.

Write child care articles for your installation newspaper or bulletin.

Talk to parents and members of community agencies. Ask questions. Follow up with people who seem interested.

Invite individual military units to "adopt" a room in the center and ask them to provide the labor and other occasional volunteer services in support of that room.

The initial approach to people who are prospective volunteers is very important. PARENTS AND OTHER VOLUNTEERS ARE THREATENED BY THE THOUGHT OF A LONG-TERM INVOLVEMENT. For this reason, an initial invitation to a volunteer might be an

invitation to come to the center one time to do one specific thing. Don't suggest a weekly obligation the first time you request a service. Successful volunteer programs recommend that the prospective volunteer should be

made to feel that he or she really is needed for a well-defined important job at the center.

convinced that his or her special skills, talents or interests will be put to good use at the center.

aware that he or she will receive whatever help and support from the center staff that may be necessary.

welcomed as a part of the home-center-community partnership in which everyone is working together to provide the best care for young children.

When you, your staff members or a volunteer coordinator responsible for the program have some interested prospective volunteers, you will want to take time to have them fill out a short questionnaire and have an informal talk with them. While you are talking, consider these questions:

What is the motivation of the person to be a volunteer? Is this motivation in line with your center's needs, philosophy and goals?

Would you employ this person if you had a vacancy? If not, why not? Remember, center users often cannot tell staff from volunteers.

Will this person feel resentful when he/she sees that other people are being paid for what seem like the same things that he/she is doing as a volunteer?

Does this person seem to need a lot of direction and careful supervision? Can he/she initiate activities and carry them out without close supervision?

If you decide that you have found a volunteer with good potential, you should make it clear that some minimum ongoing training will be required if they plan to volunteer on a regular basis. This simple requirement may deter an insincere applicant.

A questionnaire like the one on the following page will give you some concrete information about the interested person which will allow you to find kinds of things which are appropriate to his or her interests and abilities.

VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

The information on this form will help us find the most appropriate and satisfying volunteer activities for you. We appreciate your taking the time to complete it.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Home Address: _____ Phone: _____

_____

Birth Date: _____ Number of Children: ___ Ages: _____

Work Experience: _____

_____

Are you employed now? Yes ___ No ___ If yes, hours per week _____

Special skills, interests, or hobbies (crafts, music, bilingual ability, carpentry, cooking)

_____

_____

_____

What kinds of volunteer activities would interest you most in a child care center? _____

_____

Do you prefer to work with any particular age group? (infants, toddlers, preschoolers, school-age) _____

Time you have available to work as a volunteer:

Hours per week _____ Regularly each week: Yes ____ No ____

Any preferred days or hours? _____

_____

Whom should we contact in case of an emergency?

Name: _____ Phone: _____ Relationship: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____ Relationship: _____

In addition to this Volunteer Information form, or as a part of the form, you should have the volunteer sign a statement which assures that he or she understands there is to be no reimbursement for the duties performed. Such volunteer agreements usually are a part of each service's regulations covering the use of volunteers. The following is the Volunteer Agreement statement used by one service branch.

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

I, the undersigned, desire to volunteer my services to the _____

Program at _____
(Installation/Community)

I expressly agree that my services are being performed as a volunteer and that I am not, solely because of these services, an employee of the United States Government or any instrumentality thereof. I expressly agree that I expect no present or future salary, wages, or related benefits as payment for these volunteer services.

_____ _____
(Typed Printed Name and Signature) *(Date)*

Accepted.

_____ _____
(Typed Printed Name and Signature) *(Date)*

ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

Participation in an orientation program or session should be required of every person who chooses to give time to the child care center. While this may seem unnecessary to some volunteers, it is important that they become familiar with center operations and policies and that they have a clear understanding of how their volunteer duties fit into the overall center program. Further, the more fully volunteers understand the center and its operations, the less staff time will be needed to explain those things to volunteers as they work in the center.

Volunteer orientation meeting

Volunteers will appreciate the opportunity to meet and talk with a center staff member or coordinator who can explain the kinds of things that they can do in the center and what the center's program involves. Ideally, these orientation meetings will permit volunteers to meet the director and as many staff members as possible. A list of staff names and assignments would be a helpful handout in this first meeting.

Other details such as sign-in and sign-out procedures, dress code and any other administrative details should be reviewed during this initial meeting.

One military center's volunteer orientation session covered the following topics:

1. Services which volunteers can perform
2. General philosophy of the center
3. Volunteer-staff relationship and responsibilities
4. Scheduling - recording volunteer hours/recognition awards
5. Dress code/uniforms
6. Discipline
7. Care of a sick child
8. Volunteer health check
9. Voicing complaints
10. Supplies and equipment
11. "Limits" to the number of adults in one section
12. Center tour, meet staff - with question-and-answer period

It would be useful if you prepared a checklist for your center of things that volunteers might choose to do. This checklist can be developed in a meeting with your staff. This process would be a good one for getting staff involved and interested in a volunteer program. In developing such a list, you and your staff might want to think of several categories of things that might be done, such as

One-time only activities
Activities to do at home
Activities with children
Other activities that don't involve working directly with children

This list also could be a great handout for parents whose children are new center users. It would give them some concrete ideas about how they could participate in the center if they wished to and it would give you some idea of the interests and talents of your parents. The list might look something like that which follows on the next page.

VOLUNTEER CHECKLIST

All child care centers could be even better if they had some additional caring people to help enrich the program. There are plenty of ways that parents and other volunteers can be involved in the center and have a lot of fun, too. In whatever way you might choose to help, whether working directly with children or through other services to the center, you can be sure that your contribution is needed and valued.

Look at the following list of things that could enrich this center. Then, take a few minutes to check those activities that look most in line with your interests and skills.

One-Time Only Activities

weekend clean up/paint up ___
paint wall murals ___
refinish furniture or equipment ___
assemble new piece of equipment ___
photograph children ___
bring pet or object of interest ___
sing, tell a story, play instrument ___
help with a special party ___
chaperone a field trip ___

Activities To Do At Home

make, collect or repair equipment or toys ___
bake bread or cookies ___
make doll clothes ___
make teaching aids, flannel boards, puppets ___
wash dress-up clothes or paint smocks ___
locate resource materials for caregivers ___
save coffee cans, boxes, spools, paper for center ___
serve as telephone chairperson ___

Activities With Children

teach skill or organize after-school interest group ___
provide assistance with feeding ___
sit with children during nap time ___
help supervise outdoor play yard ___
play with infants/toddlers ___
take infants/toddlers for walks or in strollers ___
rock infants ___
supervise or assist caregiver in interest areas:
- art/painting ___
- cooking ___
- singing/music ___
- dramatic play ___
- movement/dancing ___
- carpentry ___

Other Center Activities

help with parent newsletter ___
take inventory of toys and equipment ___
make and run dittos ___
keep one cupboard neat ___
organize toy/book lending library ___
be in charge of one bulletin board ___
help in reception area during busy hours ___
keep parent lounge neat and supplied ___
coordinate all center volunteers ___
plan parent education programs ___
gather data for center reports ___
type newsletters, correspondence ___
develop files of fingerplays, songs, poems or pictures ___
set up displays of children's work ___
change displays on science table ___
help keep center books/accounting records filed ___
keep new things in dramatic play corner ___

Name _____

Address _____

_____

Phone _____

Volunteer handbook

A good orientation program for new volunteers should include a volunteer handbook or handout which familiarizes the volunteer with the schedules, routines, health and safety regulations and goals of the child care center. The Handbook also should provide volunteers with concrete tips for working with the young children. Information on volunteer scheduling, signing-in and out, breaks, and recognition awards based on hours of service should be included in writing.

You will want to develop a Standard Operating Procedure for using volunteers in the child care center. This SOP should be included in the volunteer handbook. The following SOP was developed by one military center and given to each potential volunteer:

Prerequisites to volunteering at the center.

The volunteer must have attended the American Red Cross Volunteer training course, "Introduction to the Red Cross." This course is normally offered on the second Thursday of each month and is approximately two hours long. The volunteer will be issued an American Red Cross Volunteer Card upon completion of this course. This volunteer card, plus an identification card issued to volunteers who have completed the center orientation, must be obtained before volunteering at the child care center.

In addition, a Communicable Disease Examination is required of all volunteers. Upon successfully completing the examination, a Foodhandler's Card will be issued to the volunteer and must be presented to, and filed at, the child care center.

Assignments and scheduling.

The director of the child care center, with the assistance of the Chairperson of the volunteer agency - if one is involved - will assign each volunteer a specific time, day and room for volunteer hours. Normally, the assignments will be for a four-hour block of time.

If the volunteer is unable to fulfill her/his obligation at the center because of a legitimate excuse, she/he must telephone the center to give notification of absence on that day. Neglecting to call and/or be present three times without a legitimate excuse will necessitate dropping you from this program. It is expected that you attempt to find a replacement in the event of your absence.

No volunteer is to be working in the child care center beyond 2100 hours.

Signing in and out.

Volunteers must sign in and out on the Volunteer Book which is kept at the reception desk. Your volunteer time in the center will be versified by the receptionist initialing your hours. This will be the only record that is officially maintained verifying your hours; therefore, it is a vital constituent of our operation.

Volunteers also must present their volunteer identification card to the receptionist upon entering the center and pick it up prior to leaving the center, because it is imperative that we know at all times who is present in the center and for what purpose.

Dress code.

Wearing a uniform is mandatory. The uniform for volunteers at the child care center is a smock (jackets for men) worn over slacks. All effort must be made to appear neat, clean, fresh and modest. A name tag must be worn. Shoes should be low-heeled and comfortable.

Breaks.

Volunteers are authorized a ten-minute break after working two hours. Volunteers are responsible for providing their own lunch, but free coffee is available in the staff lounge for anyone working in the center.

General rules.

Volunteers will receive a copy of the Standard Operating Procedures for Volunteers at the Child Care Center and must sign a statement that they have read and understand the Standard Operating Procedure.

Volunteers must abide by all rules and regulations as listed in the Child Care Center Employee Handbook (posted in each room in the center).

Ongoing training

In particular, those volunteers who prefer working directly with children need to know more about the program and more about basic child development and child guidance techniques than can be covered easily in one day. Many of the jobs which do not involve working directly with young children

also require this basic understanding of child development. Different volunteers will require different amounts of training as well as different amounts of direction and support as they work.

Once all volunteers have had the initial orientation session and some experience with their jobs, more in-service training may be required. If volunteers will be working directly with children, consider having them read the Staff Development Series and the Child Environments Series of modules developed by the Military Child Care Project. Include volunteers in an occasional staff meeting so they can understand some of the inner workings of the center. Encourage volunteers to come to special workshops or lectures which are a part of your center's parent education program. Finally, have a potluck or other informal gathering for volunteers where they can get together, talk about volunteering and discuss questions of interest or concern with you and members of your staff.

SCHEDULING VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

Scheduling is very important to the smooth operation of a volunteer program. It is important to reach an agreement with your staff about the number of volunteers who can work comfortably in an area at a given time of day. In the preschool areas of some centers, one volunteer is used for each interest area during the morning when activities are at a peak. At lunchtime they will be helping to serve lunch and sitting and talking with children as they eat.

However you choose to use volunteers throughout the center, you will want to coordinate closely with your staff and keep a schedule of who will be volunteering in which area at what time. Some centers find that a four-hour block of time is the most workable for volunteers who are working directly with children in order to give some consistency in the adults with whom children come in contact.

A schedule of volunteers should be kept for each area in the center so that the lead caregiver knows how many adults will be present each day and how to plan.

VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

SECTION:

TIME	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.
0800 to 1200						
1000 to 1400						
1200 to 1600						
eve. until 2100						

A major consideration in scheduling volunteers is recognizing the needs of staff in each center area. When a volunteer can come on a predictable basis to work with children, staff can plan ahead for their own activities and those of their paid staff. It is a good idea to have a workshop for your staff on ways to work with volunteers and to help them plan for the use of more adults in their areas. If a daily plan is used in each section, the volunteer should be included just as the staff members are. There should be written instructions for the volunteers if their responsibilities change from day to day so that they can determine what they are to do without much caregiver direction.

A convenient way to give volunteers some ideas for working directly with children is to develop activity cards. On these 5 x 7 cards you, a caregiver or a volunteer can type a description of one activity which a volunteer might choose to do with the children in a particular interest area. You can have a number of these activity cards in an envelope or small box tacked or taped to the wall out of reach of the children in each interest area. Each card might look something like the one on the following page. With such idea cards available, a volunteer can find something that interests her/him and the children and get started without much guidance from staff.

SENSORY MOTOR

MATERIALS NEEDED: Liquid detergent
Paper cups
Children's scissors with blund ends

PROCEDURE: Fill about 1/4 of the cup with liquid detergent. Add about the same amount of water.

Give each child a pair of small scissors with blund ends.

The children hold the closed scissors by the blades and dip handles into detergent. Remove the scissors and blow into the handles of the scissors to make bubbles.

LOCATION: This activity needs to be done outdoors - a grassy area if possible, where children can run after bubbles.

When volunteers come into the center they should sign in so that someone knows they are there. As they leave, the volunteers or the receptionist should record their hours. In this way, volunteers can be recognized and given volunteer awards for the number of hours that they serve. One military center uses the following form to keep track of volunteer hours on a monthly basis.

CHILD CARE CENTER VOLUNTEER HOURS

Month _____ 19__ _____ Unit

Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	TOTAL	Trips

EVALUATING VOLUNTEERS

The better the job you do of planning specific needed activities for a volunteer to perform, the easier it will be to tell whether he or she is performing them in a way that benefits the center and satisfies the volunteer. At another level, the clearer your goals are for your volunteer program, the more easily that program can be evaluated by both your staff and the volunteers working in the center. Both types of evaluation should be undertaken regularly by centers using volunteers; that is, 1) an evaluation of the individuals working in the program and 2) an evaluation of the program itself.

In evaluating the performance of individual volunteers, most experienced volunteer coordinators recommend both informal methods such as occasional conversations to discuss how things are going, routine observations, staff feedback and review of volunteer records, as well as formal periodic assessments. The method of setting goals with each volunteer, then sitting together to evaluate progress toward these goals every several months is a good way for both the volunteer and the center director or coordinator to see in a more formal way whether things are on track. If they are not, the coordinator and volunteer can work out some concrete recommendations for improvement or change.

In evaluating the volunteer program as a whole, all of those affected by the program should be involved. This includes the center director, the staff, the volunteers and, if possible, center users. A simple questionnaire can form the basis for such staff and for volunteers.

Staff questions evaluating the volunteer program as a whole might include

> *How much time during an average week are you in contact with center volunteers?*
>
> *How do you see your main role in relation to volunteers, e.g. as direct supervisor, as co-worker to help with routines around the center, etc.?*
>
> *Could the center use more volunteers now? Fewer? About the same number?*
>
> *How could volunteers do their present jobs better?*
>
> *What jobs, if any, could volunteers perform that they don't now?*

Could any jobs that volunteers now do probably be done better using paid staff?

What are some of the things that you think are particularly helpful about having volunteers in the center?

What are some things that could be improved?

The volunteers, on the other hand, might be asked questions such as the following.

How long have you been volunteering at the center?

Please describe your volunteer job briefly.

What are your main reasons for wanting to volunteer at the center?

What are some of the main satisfactions that you get from your work now?

What are some of your frustrations?

What are some of the good things that you see about the volunteer program now?

What do you see as some of the things that could be improved?

What would you like to learn in order to do a better job, if anything?

Do you have any suggestions for new, useful volunteer jobs that could be done in the center?

Do you have any suggestions for volunteer orientation which might make the job easier for the new volunteer?

Such questionnaires, when completed and reviewed, form the basis for future planning and needed changes. This kind of evaluation should be done on a regular basis or at any time when things seem not to be going well. For example, if you notice that many volunteers are not fulfilling their commitments or if your volunteer turnover rate is high, you need to take a look at your program and get some feedback from those involved.

RECOGNIZING VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS

The work of every volunteer must have recognition. This should be given informally on a day-to-day basis by staff working with the volunteers, as well as more formally through volunteer recognition affairs or through occasional articles in the center newsletter or installation newspaper. This public recognition of volunteer efforts is an important way to say "Thank you" and to encourage individual initiatives. Some other ways to encourage and recognize volunteers include those which follow.

A uniform or name tag

Most formal volunteer programs have distinctive uniforms to help identify volunteers as they work. The uniforms also serve to protect the volunteer's clothing. If your center's volunteers are Family/Community Services volunteers or Red Cross volunteers, for example, they will have an identifying uniform or name tag. If they are not a part of a formal program, you may want to consider recommending that volunteers purchase an inexpensive smock or you may want to award a smock and/or name tage to volunteers who have completed their orientation program and have contributed a given number of hours, for example 50, to the center program.

A pin or certificate for hours served

In recognition of volunteer participation and achievements, center directors should present volunteers with special awards and letters of appreciation. The installation commander and other local community persons, including parents, should participate in such awards ceremonies. In formal volunteer programs, recognition of some sort is given to the volunteer who has worked 50 hours, 100 hours and/or one year, two years and so forth.

Child care for volunteers' children

It is necessary to consider the requirements that a volunteer might have in order to be free to contribute time and service. For example, if a volunteer is the parent of a preschool or young school-age child, in order to be free to volunteer, he or she might need child care for his/her own children.

In addition to this "free" child care which the volunteer should receive while actually volunteering, the center may want to award additional "free" child care at the center which may be used at any time.

One military center authorized an hour of free child care for every two volunteer hours worked at the center *in addition to* the child care provided while the volunteer was working. The volunteer SOP for that center read as follows:

> Free child care
>
> Volunteers in the child care center are authorized one hour of free child care for each two hours of volunteer time worked at the child care center. This hour is in addition to the free child care the volunteer receives while actually volunteering, and it may be used at any time the volunteer chooses to use it. These free hours may be accumulated and records of accumulated hours will be kept by the receptionist at the center. This free child care is authorized only for dependent children of the volunteer.

Since there is no such thing as "free" child care from the center's perspective, it is wise to find an organization or association which will pick up the cost of such "free" child care used by volunteers. For example, one military center was able to enlist the financial support of the installation's Thrift Shop which reimbursed the center for all child care hours used by volunteers.

REFERENCES

We have found the titles included in this section to be useful references in the general area of involving parents and volunteers in military child care programs. Some of them have been quoted in this module, all have been reviewed in the module's preparation. You may find them valuable sources of additional information.

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* U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1982 O - 371-103